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February 9, 2005

The Honorable John Cornyn
U.S. Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn:

The National Newspaper Association, an organization representing over 2,500 community newspapers nationwide, supports your efforts to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act. The OPEN Government Act of 2005 is a sound step toward a better FOIA.

Openness and transparency in government is vital to the proper functioning of a democratic government. Ensuring unhindered access to government information by the public is the utmost responsibility of our elected leaders, for without this access, it would be impossible for the consent of the governed to be truly informed.

The Freedom of Information Act is an important tool in achieving this lofty goal, and it has proven to be useful to community newspapers around the country. The Act requires continual oversight from Congress to ensure the spirit of the law remains intact. Congress has neglected this duty in recent years, and we are pleased that you have undertaken efforts to rectify this neglect.

We want to emphasize that FOIA serves a function beyond providing records to requesters filing written requests. It also serves as a talisman for openness in similar state laws. It provides a framework for releasing information that is informally requested by journalists and others—a function of particular importance to community newspapers.

We will look forward to working with you as the bill is considered by the Judiciary Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Matthew Paxton".

Matthew Paxton
Chairman, Government Relations Committee
National Newspaper Association